



*Joshua Lederberg*

## Searching Debate Needed On Issue of Building ABM

"IF MAN is to have a future at all, it will have to be a future overshadowed with the permanent possibility of a thermonuclear holocaust. Now this whole subject matter tends to be psychologically unpleasant. But there is an even greater difficulty standing in the way of constructive and profitable complex in its technical aspects."

Thus did Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara introduce his announcement of support for a limited anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defense system last September. His proposal was directed to marginal threats from China. The "thin, anti-Chinese ABM" has been the subject of at least some debate in proportion to its importance and complexity.

The Senate now promises to spend many more days and weeks in a searching inquiry into President Johnson's proposals for the legal control of civilian firearms. In a few hours last week, it disposed of an amendment which has a crucial bearing on our nuclear arms policy, and on the possibility of rational control of the global arms race.

THE AMENDMENT, introduced by Sen. John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.) and Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.) sought to postpone the initial construction work on the \$5.5 billion Sentinel ABM system. Its introduction had been preceded by rumors that the White House would not be averse

to using the savings for the fiscal gap, but also by admonitions from the GOP policy committee and candidate Nixon about the need for the United States to maintain absolute nuclear supremacy at all costs.

The amendment lost, 52 to 34, which would be a minor incident were it merely a parliamentary maneuver to reverse an earlier affirmation of McNamara's policy. But many Senators viewed Sentinel in much larger terms. According to Sen. Richard B. Russell, "this is the first block in a system to defend against a Soviet missile attack." Serious technical criticisms have been lodged against the possible efficacy of any missile-defense system, and against Sentinel in particular. These already warrant a full-dress debate, not to mention the treacherous implications of any visionary prospects of a more effective defense.

FAR FROM reaffirming his predecessor's cautions, Defense Secretary Clark Clifford made the astonishing remark that Senators were "entitled to view this entire matter as they see fit, and to present those arguments which they think are the most compelling." This would imply that he has no policy, that the Senate could never really know what it was approving, or that the Sentinel system is an end in itself which bears no important relationship to national security or foreign policy.

These inferences all have precedents and may all be true. Most hopeful is the sense that Mr. Johnson may still defer spending on Sentinel, particularly in the light of the prospective arms-limitation talks between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Secretary McNamara's address went on to stress the hazards of the policy he had advocated: "We may psychologically lapse into the old oversimplification about the adequacy of nuclear power. There is a kind of mad momentum intrinsic to the development of all new nuclear weaponry... The so-called heavy ABM shield—at the present state of technology—would in effect be no adequate shield at all... but rather a strong inducement for the Soviets to vastly increase their own offensive forces." Is this what the heavy arms proponents have in mind in arguing that any system that would save American lives is a sound investment?

THE MAJOR powers are now moving into difficult and complex negotiations on arms control. It is more vital than ever that the public and the Congress advance their thinking beyond the superstitions of nuclear supremacy and absolute security. Presidential candidates, the Cabinet, and all other would-be statesmen share the responsibility for intelligent debate that exposes and perfects the policy of the Nation.

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debate over the issues. And that is that nuclear strategy is exceptionally